



Ac No 25113

THE
PROBLEM OF THE NORTHMEN.

A LETTER TO JUDGE DALY,
The President of the American Geographical Society.

EBEN NORTON HORSFORD.

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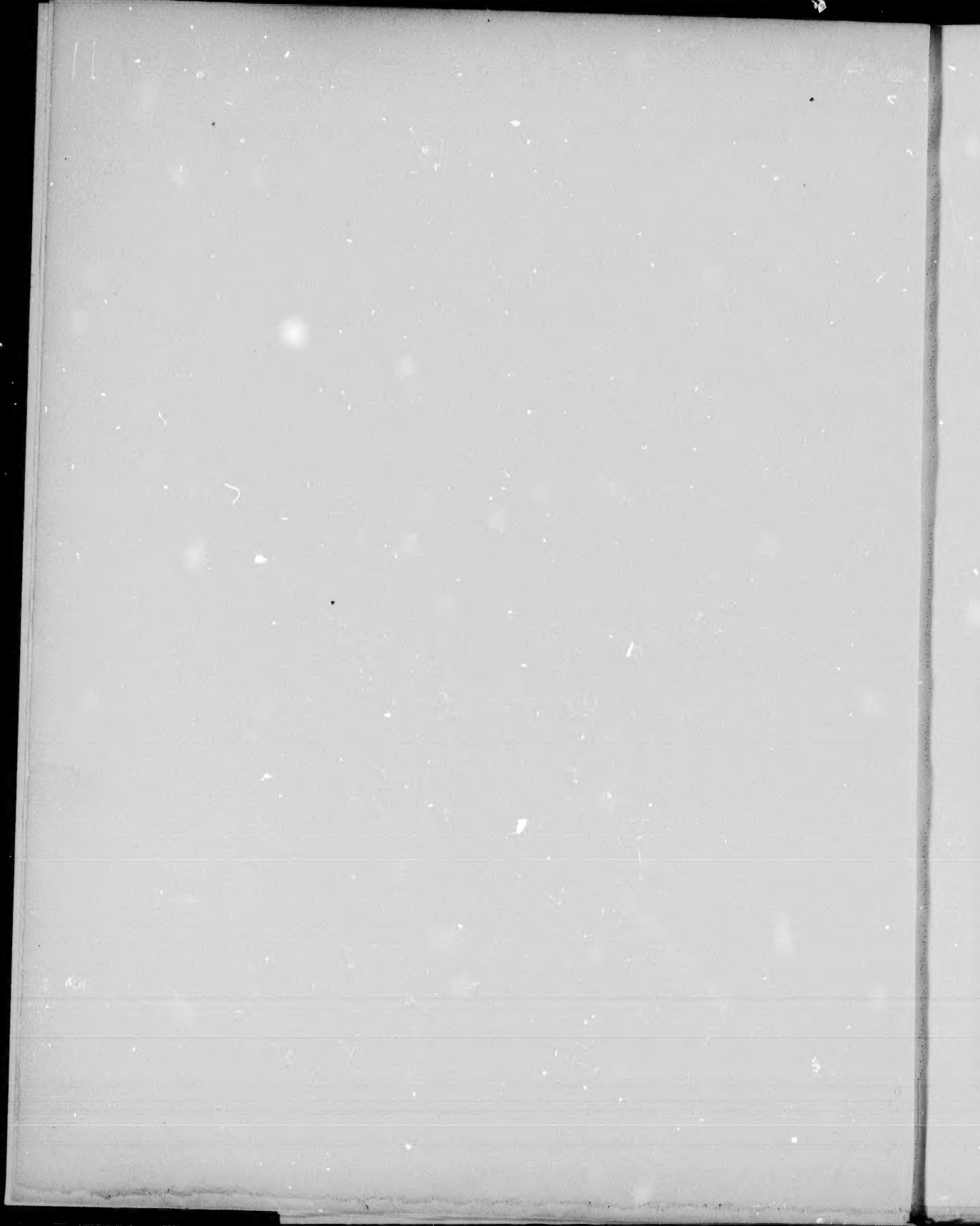
BY JAMES H. HARRIS, M.D.

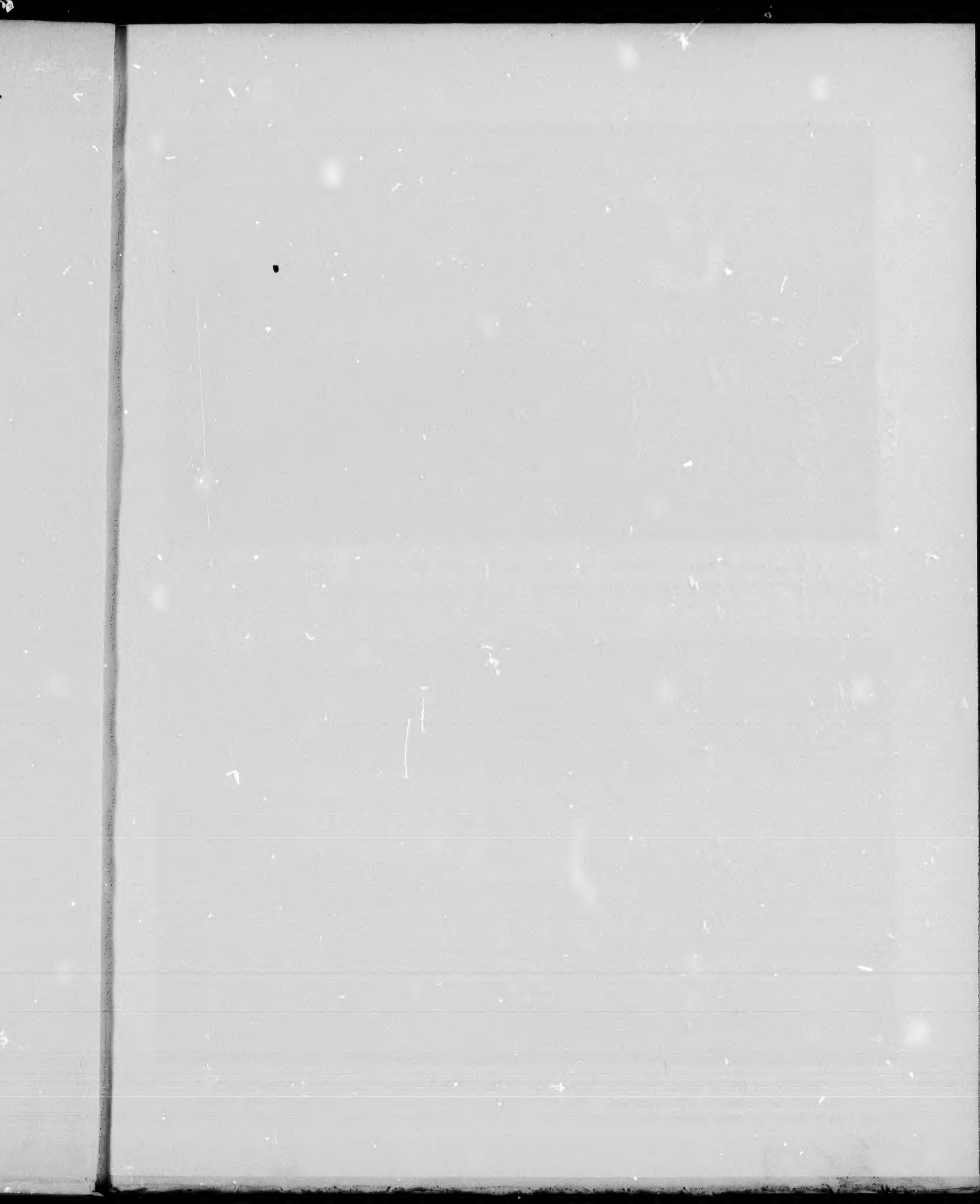
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Landing place of Thorflinn on return from seeking Thorhall, at the left of two stumps in front of excavation at the right of white area. Fish pit before white area.



Fish pit on line of stream from the high lands of Mt. Auburn Cemetery in centre. Corner of site of Thorflinn's long house in left foreground. Site of two huts on the right above the road way. Mt. Auburn tower above the more distant site.

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THE
PROBLEM OF THE NORTHMEN.

A LETTER TO JUDGE DALY,
The President of the American Geographical Society,

ON THE OPINION OF JUSTIN WINSOR, THAT

"THOUGH SCANDINAVIANS MAY HAVE REACHED THE SHORES OF LABRADOR, THE SOIL OF
THE UNITED STATES HAS NOT ONE VESTIGE OF THEIR PRESENCE."

BY
EBEN NORTON HORSFORD.

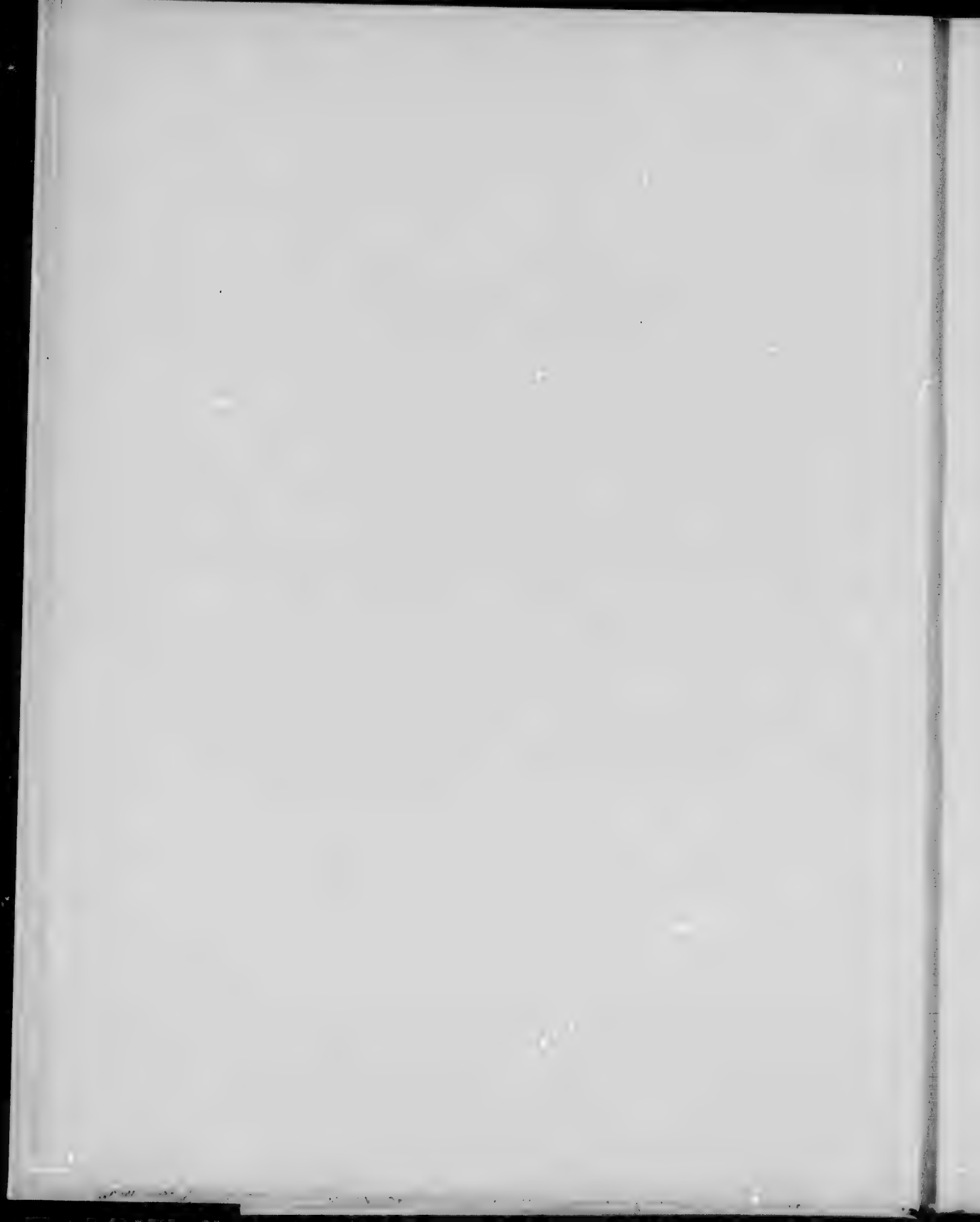
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PREFACE.

IN the interest of the reader I have thought to add to the recently published letter to the President of the American Geographical Society, a few heliotypes borrowed from two papers now in press, and include them in an edition for private circulation.



THE PROBLEM OF THE NORTHMEN.

JUDGE DALY, *President of the American Geographical Society.*

DEAR SIR,—As relating to my letter addressed to you March 1, 1885, on "The Landfall of John Cabot in 1497 and the site of Norumbega," and published in the October Bulletin of the same year, I desire to make to you the following communication.

My eye has fallen on two brief paragraphs on page 98, Vol. I., the last issued of the seven volumes of the "Narrative and Critical History of America." They may be found in the chapter on "Precolumbian Explorations, by Justin Winsor," under the general division of the *Discovery of America by Northmen*, and are as follows:—

"Nothing could be slenderer than the alleged correspondences of languages; and we can see in Horsford's 'Discovery of America by Northmen' to what a fanciful extent a confident enthusiasm can carry it.

"The most incautious linguistic inferences, and the most uncritical cartographical perversions, are presented by Eben Norton Horsford in his 'Discovery of America by Northmen.'"

These paragraphs are preceded by a fragment of history, as follows:

"The question,"—to wit, the Landfall of the Northmen, and the trustworthiness of the Vinland Sagas in regard to their experiences and the detailed events of their stay on any part of the coast of New England,—

says Mr. Winsor, "was brought to a practical issue in Massachusetts by a proposition raised, at first in Wisconsin by the well-known musician Ole Bull, to erect in Boston a statue to Leif Ericson. The project, though ultimately carried out, *was long delayed, and was discouraged by members of the Massachusetts Historical Society, on the ground that no satisfactory evidence existed to show that any spot in New England had been reached by the Northmen. The sense of the Society was fully [?] expressed in the report of their committee [?], Henry W. Haynes and Abner C. Goodell, Jr., in language which seems to be the result of the best historical criticism; for it is not a question of the fact of discovery, but to decide how far we can place reliance on the details of the Sagas.* There is likely to remain a difference on this point. The committee say:—

"*There is the same sort of reason for believing in Leif Ericson that there is for believing in the existence of Agamemnon,—they are both traditions accepted by the later writers; but there is no more reason for regarding as true the details related about his discoveries, than there is for accepting as historical truth the narratives contained in the Homeric poems. It is antecedently probable that the Northmen discovered America in the early part of the eleventh century; and this discovery is confirmed by the same sort of historical tradition, not strong enough to be called evidence, upon which our belief in many of the accepted facts of history rests.*"

The following on page 93, quoting from Bancroft's third edition, to the intent that though "*Scandinavians may have reached the shores of Labrador, the soil of the United States has not one vestige of their presence, is true now,*" says Mr. Winsor, "*as when first written.*" This leaves no doubt of the assurance of Mr. Winsor's conviction that Mr. Bancroft was a geographer as well as an historian.

Happy Rafn and Kohl, Humboldt and Adam von Bremen, that they were not called to listen to such judgment!

As to the fitness of *Labrador*, a region of rocky desolation, ice-bound for more than half the year, to be the *Vinland of the Northmen*, where

according to the Sagas cattle did not need to be housed in winter, where grapes abounded and corn grew spontaneously, — a land of forests and meadows, — there is among students of geography no difference of opinion. Among historians the case seems otherwise. Let us hear an Icelandic authority on Vinland, referred to and cited in "The History of the United States."

"Now it is to be told what lies *opposite* Greenland. . . . *There are such hard frosts there that it is not habitable*, so far as is known. *South* of Greenland is Helluland; next is Markland, from thence it is not far to Vinland the Good."

As to what impress may have been left by Northmen on the soil of the United States, that is not a matter of authority, but of what may be found by examination.

Should it turn out, after all, that the Landfall of the Northmen has been found, and also the site and remains of the houses Leif and Thorfinn built and occupied in Vinland, WHAT THEN?¹

It is quite true that members of the Massachusetts Historical Society discouraged the efforts of the immediate friends of Ole Bull here, and the two millions of Scandinavians of the West and the East who sympathized with him, in his patriotic wish to recognize in a monument, to be set up in

¹ Against the fly-leaf I have placed two photographs of the region of the houses of Leif and Thorfinn. The upper one presents a bayou, through which the stream draining the eastern slope from Mt. Auburn flows to the Charles, — just outside the limit of the picture. The extension of the bayou to the roadway of the "Bank Lane" is given in the lower picture. Just above the road is one of the fish-pits, at the margin of high tide and upland described in the Sagas, into which the fish found their way at the time of young corn-plants, on their way to spawning-ground on the slopes of Mt. Auburn, the tower of which is given at the upper right. At the lower left in the foreground are the remains in the uneven surface, before the grass has started, of a corner of the large house of Thorfinn's party. In the distance, in the middle of the upper picture, is the "*Promontory at the Southwest*," as described in the Sagas, from behind which the Skraelings issued. In the wood at the right is the locality of the battle with Thorfinn's men, which led him to abandon Vinland.

The landing-place of Thorfinn on his coming from the search for Thorhall, as described in the Sagas, is near two stumps at the upper right of the large white space. It is the only spot where solid land reaches the bayou, in width admitting the beam of the ship. Leif's landing-place and house were near the lower left of the upper picture. In the extreme distance is Corey's Hill.

At the end of the brochure will be found a survey of the site of the remains of the Northmen's houses.

Boston, the services of Leif Ericson in the discovery of America. It is also true that they virtually caused the rejection by the city government of Boston of the offer by the late Mr. Thomas Appleton of \$40,000 for the erection of a memorial in Scollay Square to the Discovery of America by Northmen.

It is also true that in the paragraphs cited there is, in carefully chosen terms, and in a tone of conscious infallibility better suited to an earlier day and another meridian, an intimation of the proper limit of geographical research, and of who may pursue it, in New England; and there is also an undertone of recognized authority,—all of which will find adequate appreciation. One may ask, Is Massachusetts a *preserve*?

But underneath these confessions and assumptions, the first and most obvious expression of the paragraphs, taken together, is the unconscious admission that the problem of the Northmen has been again essayed, and the assailants have been vanquished. They have mistaken a question of geography for one of bibliography—and song.

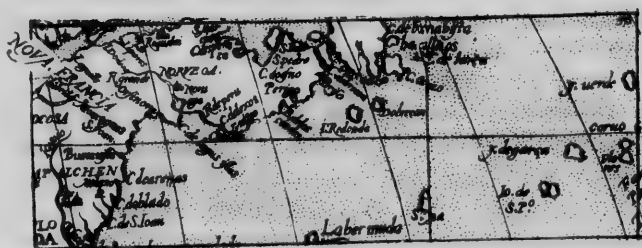
We are given an estimate of the value of comparative philology in finding out the meanings or spellings of ancient and obscure geographical names. To those competent to appreciate the wealth of revelation in geography there may be in so small a matter as the identity of *Norvega* and *Norumbega*,¹ this view of the instrument which Champollion and

¹ *Norvega* and *Norumbega*. I introduce three fragments of maps. Two are from Winsor's "Narrative and Critical History of America," the outlines from Ortelius, 1570, and from Botero, 1603. The third is a map for which I am indebted to the late classic geographer, J. Carson Brevoort, who as a young man served as attaché to the Legation of Washington Irving at the Court of Madrid, where he may have procured the map. It will be seen that they are all copies at first or second hand of a common original. They are all maps of Nova Francia. On Solis's map the "river flowing through a lake to the sea" flows also through *Norvega*, a province of Norway,—its equivalent,—as shown on the maps of the period. One does not need to be told that the *Norvega* in smaller type against the character that stands for a settlement is in the country which Leif called *Vinland*, and which centuries later was known as *Norumbega*. As I have for four years been engaged on the History of *Norumbega*, I do not propose to go into it here. This fragment is introduced merely to illustrate that this bit of comparative philology *alone*, to one capable of appreciating it, contains the solution of the problem of the Northmen.

"The French diplomatists always remembered that Boston was built within the original limits of New France" (*Bancroft's History*, 2d edition, p. 24).



ORTELIUS, 1570.

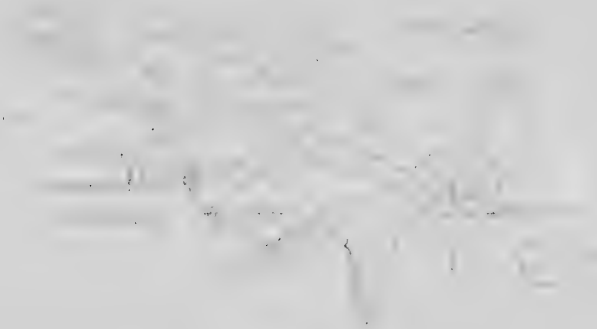
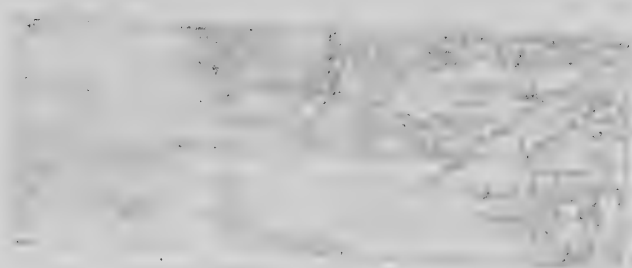
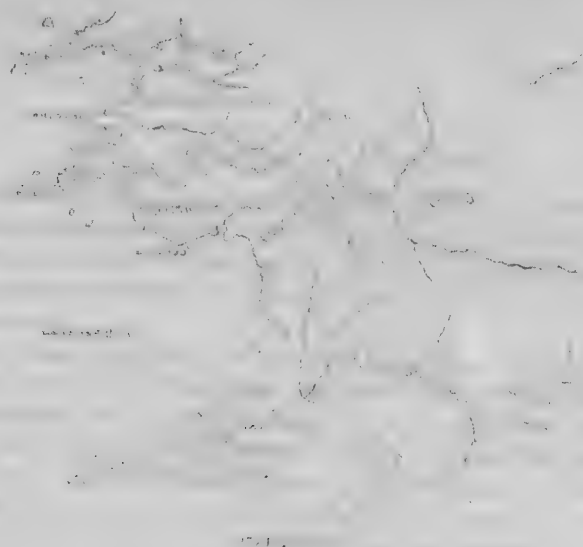


SOLIS, 1598



BOTERO, 1603.

"They sailed along until they came to a river, which flowed from the land through a lake and passed into the sea."
Thordinn's Saga.



Grimm and Max Müller and our own Whitney and Trumbull have placed in our hands will give occasion for mingled pain and merriment.

There is another judgment which is somewhat more personal. It is cited above, and as it is not impossible that it may be the last of its type, it is entitled to particular consideration. It reads: "The most incautious linguistic inferences, and the most uncritical, cartographical *perversions*, are presented in *Eben Norton Horsford's 'Discovery of America by Northmen.'*"

I understand this to be an opinion concerning the trustworthiness of my methods of studying geographical problems. They are disapproved.

The author of this paragraph has just completed the editing of the "Narrative and Critical History of America,"—one of the monumental works of the time. The papers of a large number of specialists, including the editor himself, have been gathered, and the authorities bearing upon the subjects discussed have been sought out, referred to, and commented on, and the whole illustrated on a generous scale. This work had been preceded by a "Memorial History of Boston," on the same general plan. Naturally enough, weight attaches to the editor's opinions; and if it were to be estimated by the volume of work he has performed, it would deservedly be very considerable, and there might be some difficulty in fairly measuring it. But he has taken the trouble to make the task a light one. He has adopted and practised a *method of geographical research* somewhat in vogue, but which, possibly, will be hereafter regarded as peculiarly his own; and its value in science can be estimated by looking at its fruit. The weight which should be accredited to his judgment of my method will be seen by a comparison of the fruit of my method with the fruit of the method the critic approves and practises.

This comparison may be easily made. I cannot avoid it; and under the circumstances it will not be unseemly in me to allude to some fruits, already published (and others in press, or in preparation for it), of the methods I have pursued. They include—

1. *Geographical names, of Norse derivation*, on numerous maps, ancient and modern, in Icelandic, Algonquin, Portuguese, Spanish, French, Dutch, Italian, or English garb, strewn from Vineyard Sound, in latitude 41° , throughout the territory reaching to and including the St. Lawrence.

2. The finding of the Land of the Bretons (French) of the 15th and 16th centuries, in the 43d degree.

3. The Landfall of John Cabot, 1497, in $42^{\circ} 38'$,—the great event of the 15th century,—on which, with all the glory that belongs to it, rests the earliest claim of the sovereignty of England to the American Continent.

4. The Landfall of Cortereal in 1500.

5. The Landfall of Verrazano on Cape Cod in 1524, and the identity of Cape Cod with the Florida of Verrazano and Thevet.

6. The Canal of St. Julian (St. Johan), the Bay of the Bretons, the Archipelago, and the Land—of Gomez, explored in 1525.

7. The Landfall of John Rut in 1527, and the identity of the St. John's of John Rut with Gloucester Harbor, from which he addressed his letter to Henry VIII.

8. The identity of the Cape Breton of Allefonsce, in the 43d degree, with the Cape Ann of Prince Charles.

9. The identity of the Kjöl-r-nes (Kjalarnes is the genitive) of the Northmen in 1003, with the Coaranes of Merriam, the Carenas of Lok, the C. de Arenas of Mercator, the Cap des Sablons of the Dauphin map of 1543, the Cap Blanc of Champlain in 1605, the Insel Baccalaurus of Ruysch, 1507, and its equivalent, the Cape Cod of Gosnold, 1602.

10. The meaning of the Indian names of Boston, the identity of Cabel-yau with Baccalieu,—Bacca-loo, Algonquin for Bay food, Cod,—and the identity of the Juuide of Thevet with the modern Point Judy of Rhode Island.

11. That the Isthmus of Verrazano separating the Atlantic from the western ocean—the Mare Indicum, the Mare Verrazana, the Pacific—was simply the neck of the Peninsula of Cape Cod near Barnstable.

12. That Sebastian Cabot, in his map of 1544, mistook the Penobscot and the group of islands (the discovery and cartography of others) off the coast of Maine for the St. Lawrence and Newfoundland at its mouth. That the part of the map of 1544 including New England and New France was an attempt to produce a work that should have the air of original discoveries made prior to Verrazano and Jacques Cartier, clumsily disguising some of the names Cartier gave, replacing those on the Dauphin map with others in duplicate to occupy the space, stretching out the coast from Plymouth (the Bay of St. Christopher) at the Panther's tail, on his map, to Cape Ann (the *prima tierra vista*), at the best not sixty miles to the immediate north, in latitude $42^{\circ} 38'$, until the coast line comprised *thirty degrees of longitude*, and ended at Cape North in latitude 47° , — the mouth of the St. Lawrence.

13. That the original New-found-land of John Cabot, 1497, including the (supposed) two islands passed on his return voyage and shown on Cosa's map, faced Massachusetts Bay.

14. That Terra Corterealis and the Land of Gomez overlaid the New-found-land and Islands of Cabot. The original New France, — Francesca of Verrazano of 1524, — embracing the same region, was subsequently extended by Jacques Cartier in 1534-35 over the shores of the St. Lawrence.

15. The Fort of Norumbega of Wytfliet (Ptolemy, 1597), occupied by, but not the work of, the Bretons, as Thevet supposed.

16. The explanation of why the coast between Cape Cod and the neighborhood of St. Augustine so long remained practically undiscovered.

17. That the north end of Cape Cod was an island down to some time in the 17th century, as shown on the maps of Ruysch, Cosa, Allefonsce, and others, and as observed by Leif and Gosnold.

18. That it was on this island that Leif made his Landfall before he turned away to Boston Harbor and the shores of Charles River to set up his dwellings.

I will ask attention to only one more.

In my letter of March 1, 1885, already referred to, I recorded that the site of Fort Norumbega was first found in the *literature of the subject*, and that when I had eliminated every doubt of the locality that I could find, I drove with a friend through a region I had never before visited, of the topography of which I knew nothing, nine miles away, directly to the remains of the Fort. These remains, and the region immediately about, were at once surveyed and mapped for me by the City Engineer.

In a certain sense there was, in this discovery, the fulfilment of a prophecy. On the basis of the literature of the subject I had *predicted the finding of Fort Norumbega at a particular spot. I went to the spot and found it.* No test of the genuineness of scientific deduction is regarded as superior to this. Professor Henry used to say, "Science can predict." I had not guessed, — though any one may guess, of course. But if one does, to test the guess or the hypothesis by the touchstones of physical fact, sequence, mutual relation, harmony of all parts with each, and the utter absence of an element of opposing evidence, is what the scientific method requires. Moreover, the scientific man does not hesitate for an instant to abandon his hypothesis if it fails in a single particular to sustain this test. The Fort of Norumbega had passed through the ordeal. Prediction and fulfilment of course involve time. Thevet's record waited nearly three hundred and fifty years.¹

19. The remaining discovery to which I have alluded is of the kind just presented, — *prediction and fulfilment.*

The letter of four years ago, on the Landfall of John Cabot and the site of Norumbega, indicated, as distinctly as at the time to me seemed fit, my conviction of the identity of the Kjalarnes of Thorwald and Thorfinn with the Carenas of Lok, — the great primary fact in determining

¹ This discoverer has been greatly wronged, in ignorance of course, — even charged with forgery of Indian phrases, the writer not recognizing in Thevet's records the ancient Iroquois spoken at the time at Montreal, as well as in the neighborhood of Boston (Champlain). Some of Thevet's words, naturally slightly modified in spelling, are introduced into Lescarbot; and lists of parallel phrases, including many of the words Thevet took down, may be found in De Laet and others.

the Landfall of Leif on Cape Cod and the site of the Northmen's houses in Vinland. It was of the character of recorded prophecy. This is what I said: "The map of Lok presents Carenas [enough recalling Kjalarnes of the Norsemen to suggest heirship], the C. de Arenas in various forms of so many maps of the sixteenth century, the Cape Cod of Gosnold, and, as seems to be determined by the flags of Cosa's map of 1500, the southern limit of Cabot's explorations of 1497."

At my address in Faneuil Hall, now more than a year and a half ago, on the occasion of the unveiling of the Statue to Leif, I placed on record, more definitely, another prediction.

I spoke of Leif's Landfall and the site of his houses in the following terms: "He came, so we conceive, upon the northern extremity of Cape Cod, and set up his dwellings somewhere on *an indentation* of the shore of Massachusetts Bay, the site of which *may yet be indicated*."

I added still another prediction. Speaking of Gudrid, the wife of Thorfinn, I said: "I may not fail to mention that this Gudrid was the lady who, after the death of her husband, made a pious pilgrimage to Rome [from Iceland], where she was received with much distinction, and where she told the Pope of the beautiful new country in the far west, of 'Vinland the Good,' and about the Christian settlements made there by Scandinavians. Nor may I forget to mention that her son, Snorre, born in *America at the site of Leif's houses*, — and *perhaps it may some day be possible to indicate the neighborhood of his birthplace with greater precision*, — has been claimed to be the ancestor of Thorwaldsen, the Danish sculptor."

I had traced the course of Leif in the Sagas, from his touching at Cape Cod, past the Gurnet and Cohasset, to his grounding on soft bottom, on an ebb tide, between the site of Faneuil Hall and Noddle's Island (East Boston), and his ascent of the Charles on the flood tide into and through the Back Bay to the first practicable landing-place, the neighborhood of which it was not difficult to indicate in general terms, on tide-water. So clear was the language of the Sagas and my conviction, that I veiled the prophecies and gave them place in print.

Half a year later, at a scientific gathering, I announced the discovery of the landing-place of Leif between two points scarcely a quarter of a mile apart, and mapped and photographed the stage of my conviction.¹ Later, I determined the spot within a few square yards of where Thorfinn went on shore on his return after the search for Thorhall, and again mapped and photographed the result of my studies.

But it is only since the 1st of January, 1889, that I have looked for memorials, the finding of which I had with purpose vaguely predicted. It was not necessary that they should be found, to complete the demonstration. They might utterly have perished; but happily they have resisted the corrosions and the accidents of time, and the encroachments of increasing population. The terms of the Sagas were to the student as descriptive as a chart.

THE REMAINS OF LEIF'S HOUSES.

If any one interested will walk from the junction of Elmwood Avenue with Mt. Auburn Street,—the residence of Professor Lowell in Cambridge,—a few rods down the street to Gerry's Landing, and then follow the ancient Bank Lane to the point of crossing the rivulet draining the eastern slope of Mt. Auburn into the Charles, he will be at the site of the objects of interest which had once been there, and which I had predicted might there be found.

There are in the inequalities of the surface the remains of two long log houses, and huts or cots,—possibly not less than five huts,—along a declivity of moderate grade, "some nearer, some farther from the water," as the Sagas say. They have all been photographed.

To help the eye, it may be mentioned that throughout rural Norway and Iceland generally there prevails now, as there did, as a general thing,

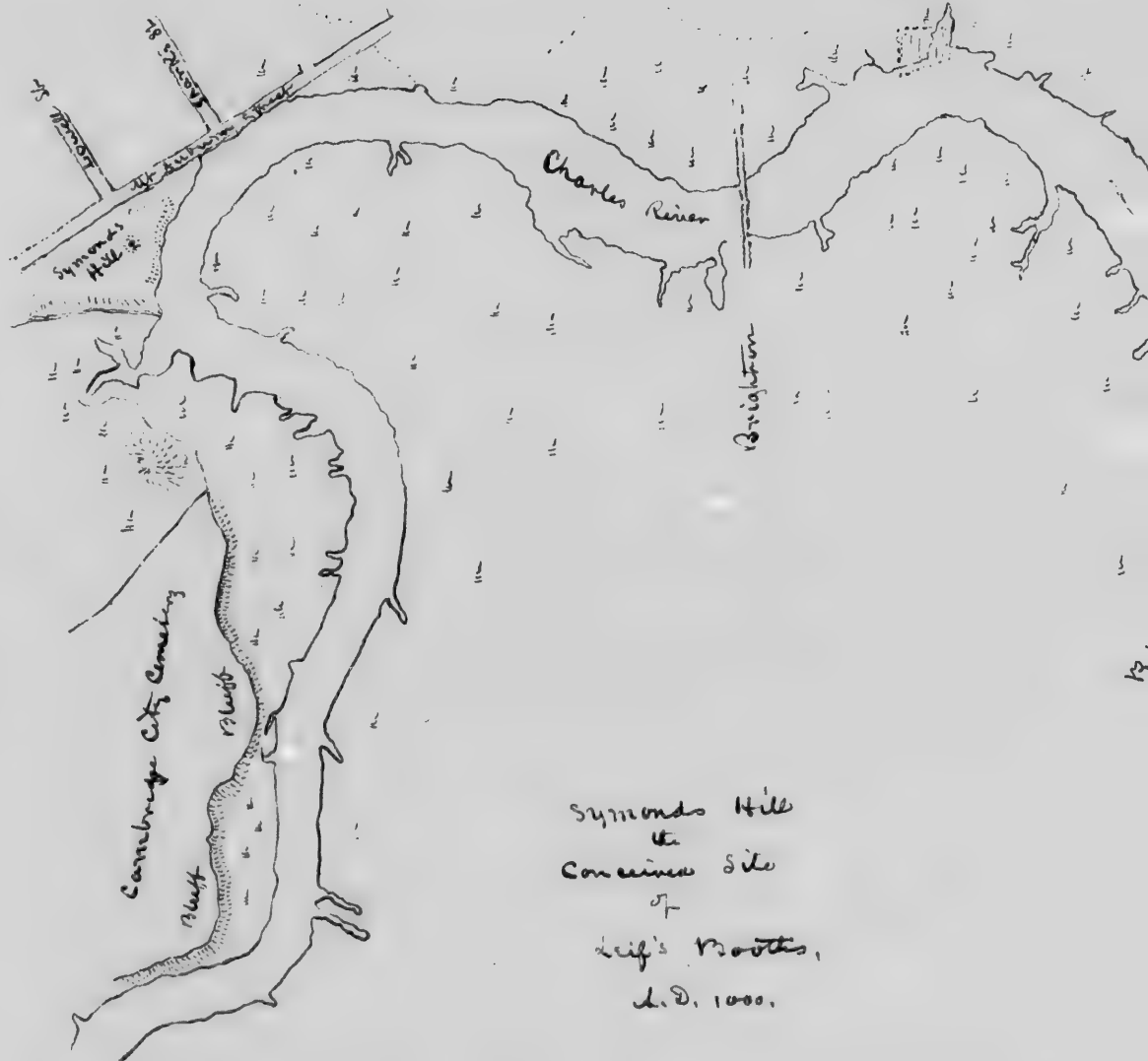
¹ I insert two charts only to illustrate the method which I have pursued. They present two stages of my research. In one I had seen the first possible landing-place above the Back Bay; in the second I had not gone far enough to individualize between the landing-places. They seemed to be worth preserving, that others might follow up the subject, should I for any reason be unable to complete the research.

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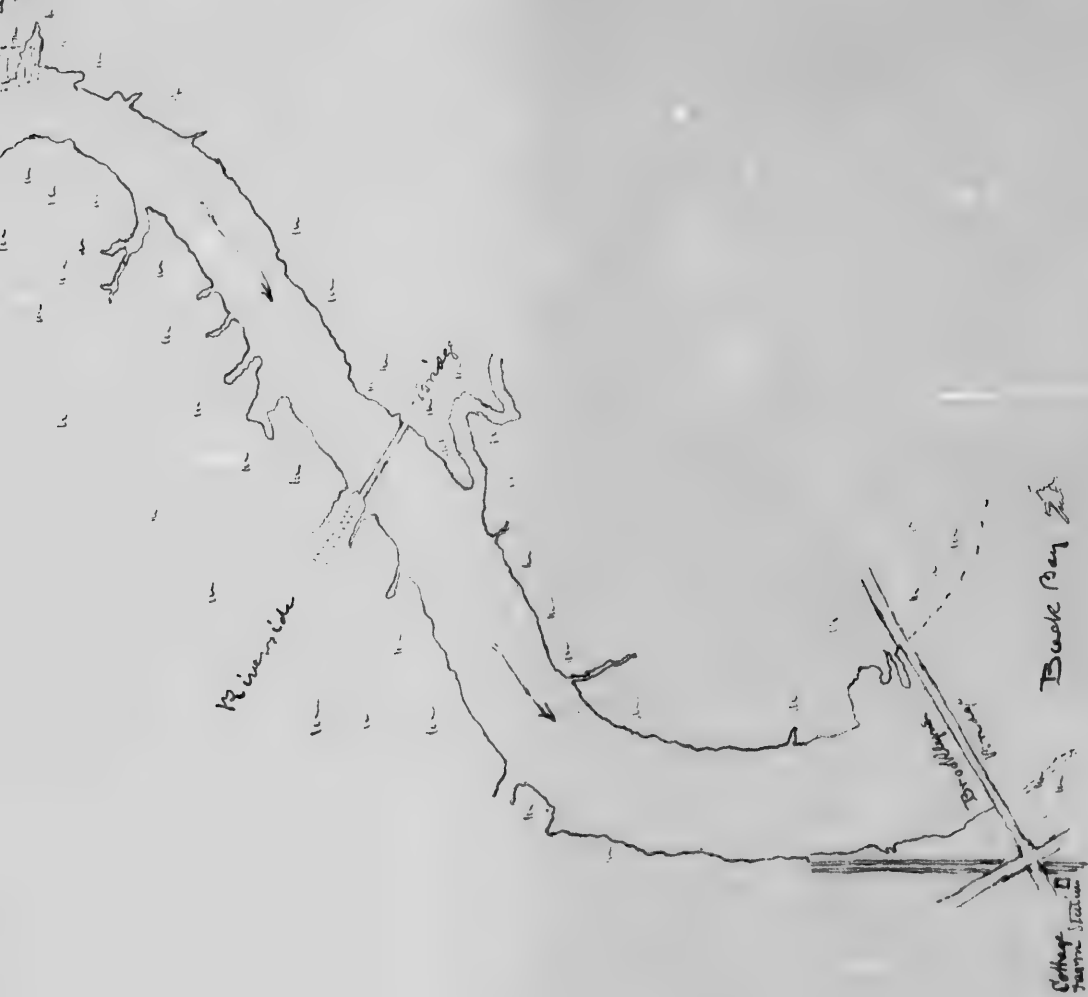
Cambridge

Sledge of rocks
now covered at
Richardson's wharf.

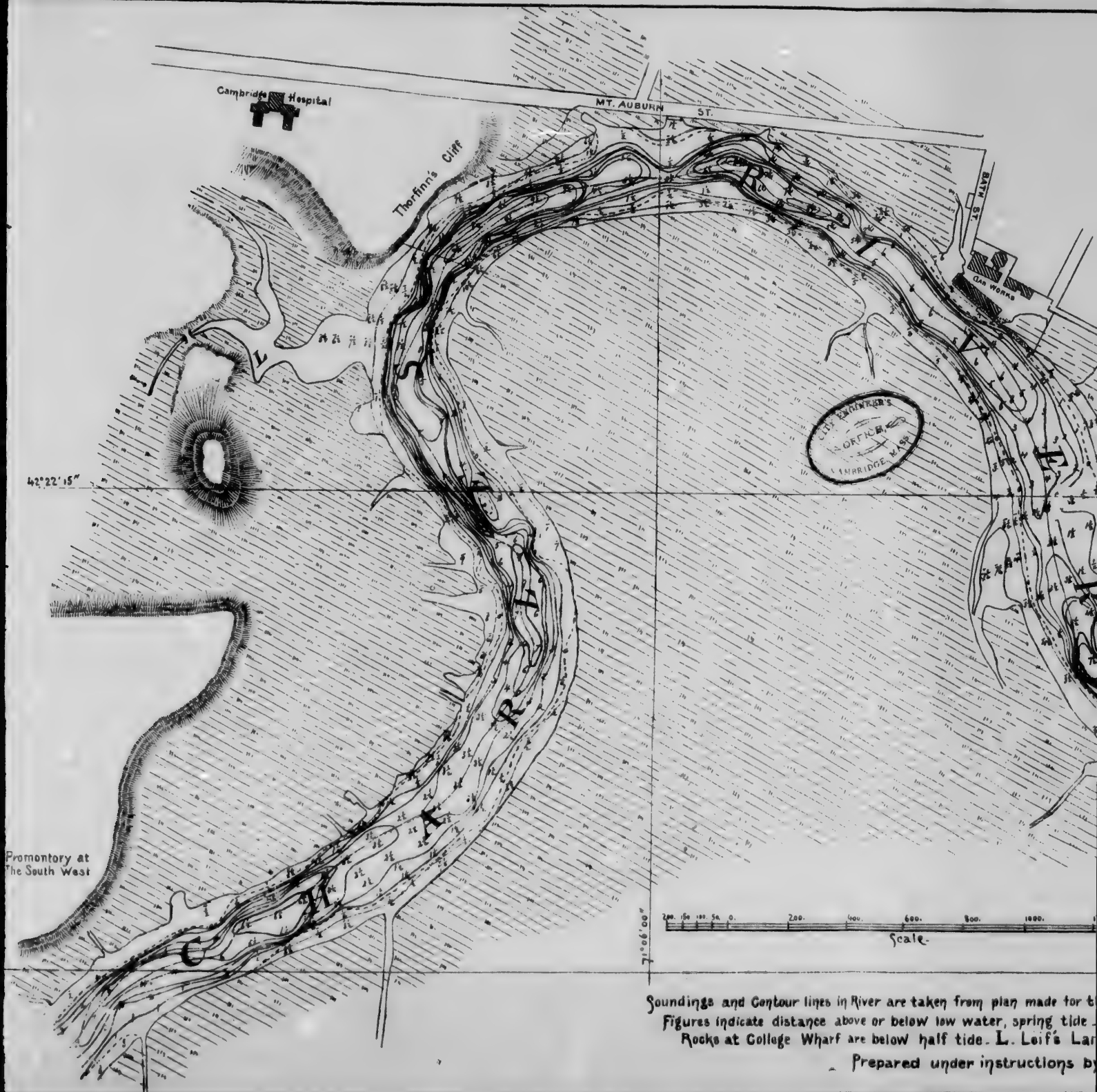


Symonds Hill
the
Cambridge City
Cemetery
A.D. 1000.

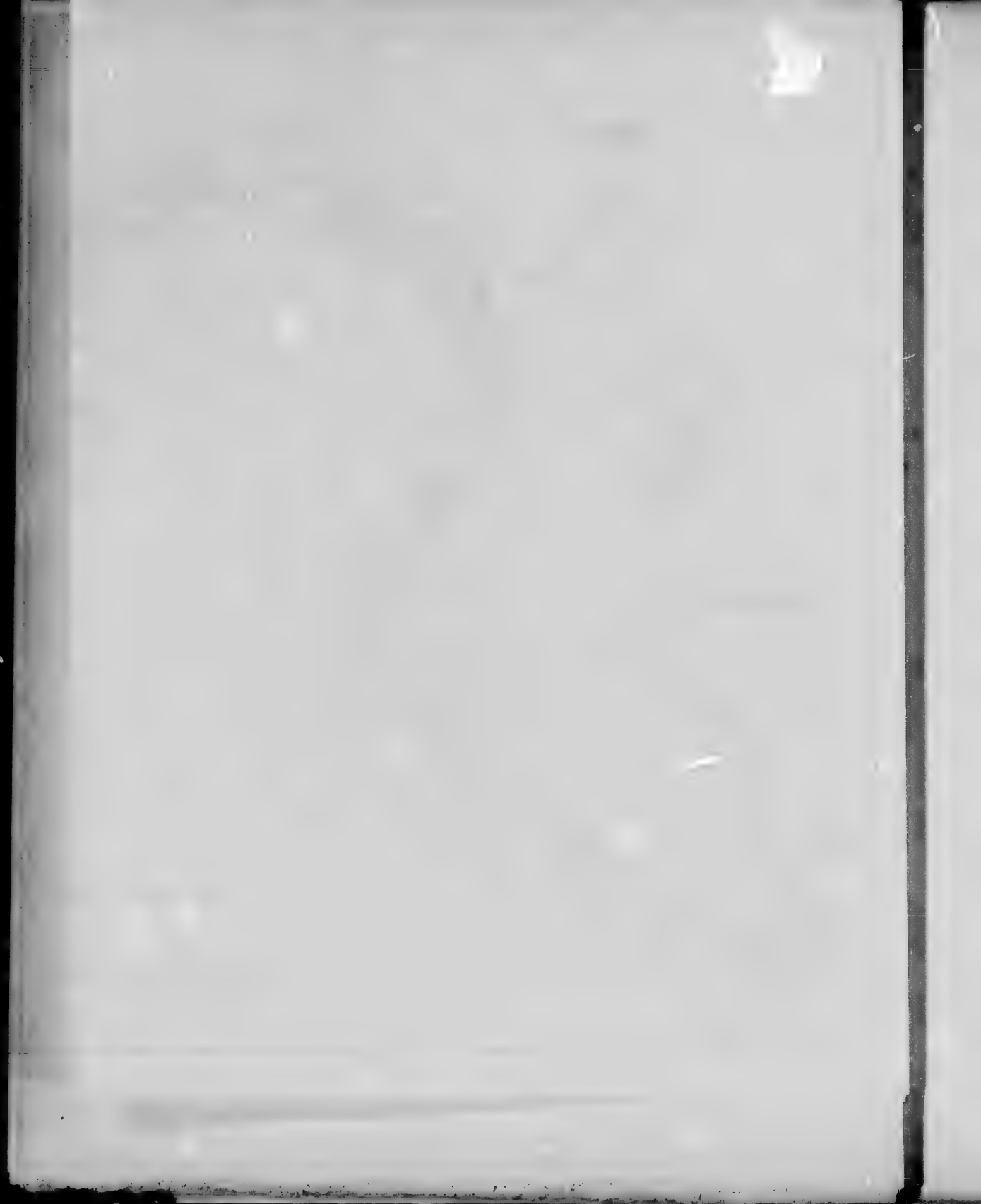
now covered at
Richardson's wharf.











nine hundred years ago, wherever a leader and his company established themselves, a principal larger house, and near it, if needed, a number of smaller houses, or cots, or huts, for servants and laborers (see Björnson's article in "Harper's Monthly" of February, 1889, page 426). The foundations of the Norse houses observed by Nordenskiöld in Greenland were long and narrow, as these are, and Leif's house presented its length to the south; such has been the immemorial usage of Icelanders in building their houses (Saga Time).

To have an idea of how long the remains of such structures continue to be distinguishable, dependent as they are on the artificial unevenness of surface, one may read Lanciani's description, in his chapter on the ruins of the Campagna, of terraces preserved, and outlines of gardens that had been abandoned on account of the malaria before the seventh century, to be found on every hand within twenty miles of Rome; or he may recall, possibly, his own recognition of the remains of corn-hills planted half a century ago and left undisturbed by cultivation; or he may have seen the palpable Indian paths traversed by Indians hundred of years ago.

There are also to be seen near Thorfinn's Landing the remains of at least three *fish-pits* described in the Sagas, all at the margin of extreme high tide, where at the time the Indian corn had just appeared above the ground (*new sown*, Beamish), as mentioned by Thorfinn. The fish were ascending the river then, as generally they are at the season of young corn-plants, to find in every tributary rivulet their spawning-ground.

According to the Sagas, the landing of Thorfinn on his return from seeking Thorhall was on the *southwest bank*; on which bank, viewed from Leif's house (afterwards occupied by Thorwald, Thorfinn, and Freydis), there is, by reason of the mud of the marsh, *but one place* where, with a promontory at the southwest, such landing is *possible*. It was from behind this promontory that the Skraelings (the Indian mob) repeatedly issued in their canoes, and behind which they as repeatedly retired, — of which promontories there is *but one*, the eastern bluff of the Cambridge Cemetery, on the Charles. Verrazano gives it as C. St. Margarita, and to-day it

abounds in daisies (*Chrysanthemum leucanthemum*). Thorfinn saw the Skraelings from the narrow, long house Leif had lent him,—its side fronting south. The site of Leif's house was near the south end of the ancient bluff of Symond's Hill, and immediately behind the point known as Gerry's Landing.

It was on the shore of a Hóp, "*a small land-locked bay, salt at flood tide and fresh at ebb*" (Vigfusson), that Leif's houses—the *Norman Villa* on Maiollo's map (Verrazano's, 1524) and the Ulpian globe, 1542—were set up nine hundred years ago. Verrazano mentions the "lake three leagues around" in his letter to the king, 1524. It was "*the lake through which a river flowed to the sea*,"—Leif's guide to his houses, given to Thorfinn and the others.¹

These are among the geographical treasures that my methods of research have enabled me to gain for the History of Massachusetts.

THE FRUIT OF MR. WINSOR'S METHOD.

We now come to the method which Mr. Winsor approves. We have not far to go for an illustration. I shall present but one.

In the latter part of the year 1885, Mr. Winsor discovered in the town of Weston, at the mouth of Stony Brook, a tributary to the Charles,—one of the branches of the Rio Grande on so many maps of the 16th century,—the remains of an early effort, under the direction of Winthrop, to *lay out and fortify the future town of Boston*.

I say Mr. Winsor discovered the remains. This is not quite correct. What he discovered was that in the remains of an excavation for a ditch, estimated by him to be scarcely more than six hundred feet long, *in some*

¹ If one may illustrate lesser by greater instances of prophecy and fulfilment, I may, without unworthy pride, refer to the study of the Vinland Sagas and the predictions resting upon them, which I made, and my finding the places and the remains described in the stories of Leif, Thorwald, and Thorfinn, as having their parallel in the work of Dr. Milchöfer and Professor Merriam, of Columbia College, the director for 1887-88 of the American Classical School at Athens, in the discovery of the ancient *Icaria*. (See Seventh Annual Reports.)

places twelve feet deep, and through much of the distance carefully graded, and paved with stone on the bottom and sides, there were only evidences of an early effort on the part of Winthrop and a detachment of his company to lay out and fortify the future capital of Massachusetts.

As a matter of history, within a few weeks after I had discovered the site of Fort Norumbega, described with much precision in the early literature of the subject, and figured in Ptolemy (Wytfliet, 1597), I invited Mr. Winsor to drive with me to the mouth of Stony Brook, some nine miles from Cambridge, where I pointed out the details of a ditch, as far as I had studied them. I subsequently gave him a map of the spot, prepared by the Engineer of the Cambridge Water-works, and my paper containing the demonstration that the work was Fort Norumbega, described by Thevet, and, less definitely, by others.

He regarded it as a piece of guess-work. Why should he not guess? He guessed it was an early Boston, planned by Winthrop, and the work performed by a part of his invalid company.

Now, while a guess may be evidence of the fertility of the imagination, and has its proper place in research, it is, at the best, only the extemporaneous chalk-sketch, that may vanish with the first brush that tests the substance of its foundation, — the last thing to be given to the world, till it has been tested.

What followed the guess? Let us see.

He presented it to the Massachusetts Historical Society, and sent an outline of his communication to the "Evening Transcript," of which the following is an extract:—

"Mr. Winsor made a communication in reference to a ditch and embankment found in Weston, at the confluence of Stony Brook with the Charles, which indicate, as has been lately said, that a trading-post and fort were erected there by the French in the early part of the 16th century. *He gave reasons for the opinion that these relics may mark the site of an early attempt to found the town of Boston there, since, soon after the*

arrival of Winthrop at Salem, he set out for Charlestown, whence, with a party, he explored the neighboring rivers for a convenient spot to found their town, and discovered such a place 'three leagues up Charles River.'"

To this, as published, I replied on the day of its appearance, and my reply appeared in the "Transcript" of January 9. I did not dwell on the circumstance that my paper, and its *demonstration* that the earth-and-stone works at the mouth of Stony Brook *had been described* and occupied by the Bretons (French) *nearly three hundred and fifty years before*, had been treated as a mere guess. I tried to place the mistake of the discovery of the early Boston at Stony Brook in what seemed to me clear light, calling attention to the magnitude of the work required to be done by a few feeble men in a very short time, — a graded ditch, some of it originally ten to twelve feet deep, and much of it paved on the bottom and sides (and therefore, as any one might see, *impossible* to be regarded as *awaiting posts for a permanent stockade*). I alluded to the adverse testimony of Winthrop's own map of 1634; his diary of his *first* visit to Stony Brook, a year and a half *after* he had determined that the present Boston should be the seat of government, and an almost equal time since the first session of the Assistants had been held at his house in Boston; the absence of any supporting contemporaneous or subsequent history; the impossibility of getting ordnance, baggage, and stores up the shallow Charles, falling in a distance of five miles, as it did, in alternating rapids and pools, thirty-five feet from Stony Brook to tide-water at Watertown; the jealous Dudley's conclusive letter to the Countess of Lincoln; and much more.

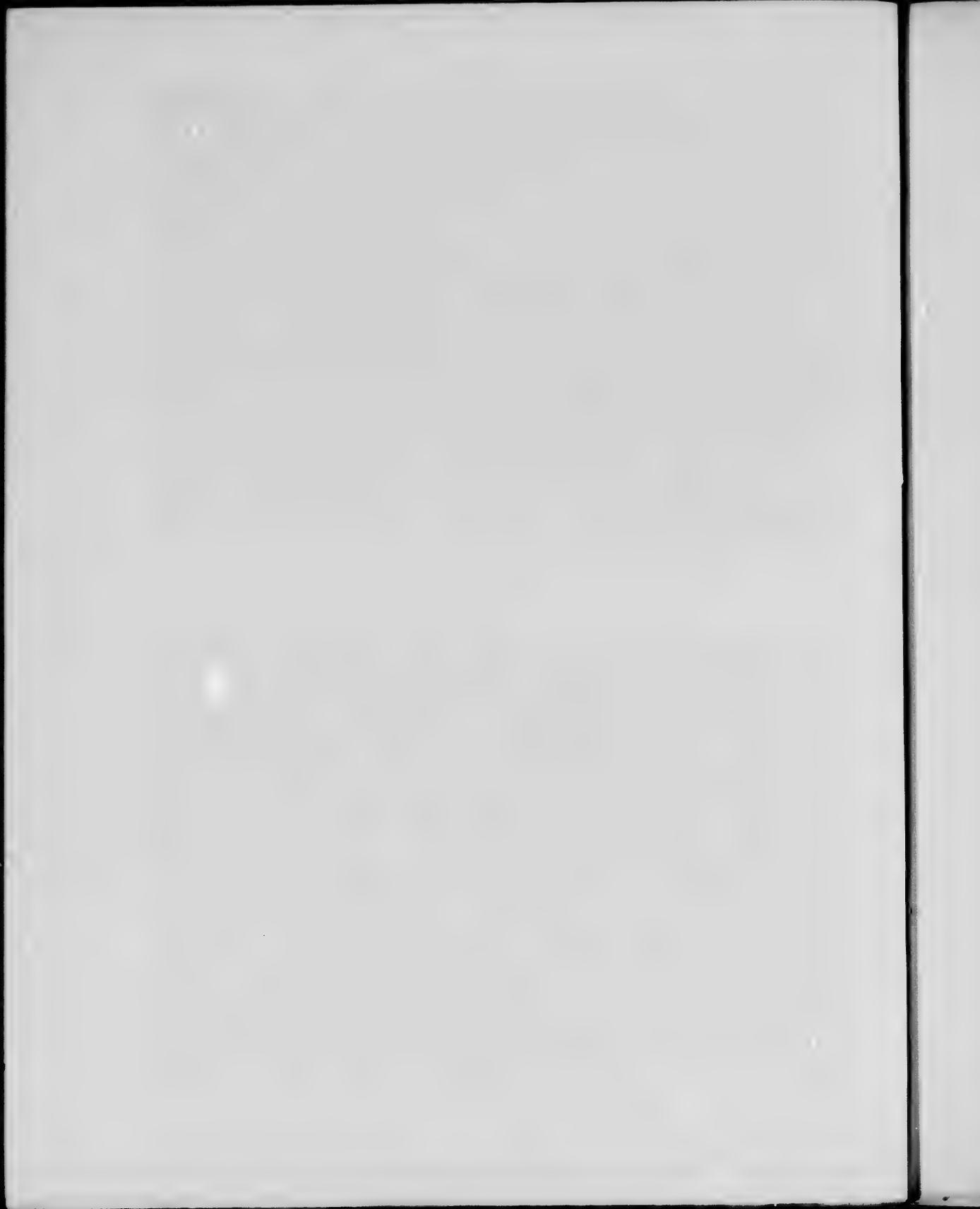
At length Mr. Winsor's full paper appeared. To my surprise, the whole of what I had said of the earth-and-stone work as being the remains of an ancient fort, the story of which was embedded in the literature of geography, was practically ignored. To an elaborate defence of his guess, including abundant citations from early records, he gave the following additional reasons for his first conviction: —



Stone wall and canal or ditch near Norse dam.



Stone wall and canal near the Norse Dam and Sibley's Station, Fitchburg R. R.



"The fact that the embankment is continued three hundred feet both north and south from the enclosed portion [the fort] in a way to afford no protection against attack, seems to indicate that the whole is but a segment of a line of circumvallation which was left unfinished, the stockade not being planted in the portions already excavated." It will be borne in mind that just such an extensive circumvallation as may have been here intended was, some months later, established at Cambridge."

He did not omit to leave a hint of his consciousness that he might have overtasked the credulity of his readers as well as of himself. The paper was printed for permanent preservation in the Records of the Massachusetts Historical Society. It was also published, as seemed to me due, in a second letter from myself, in the "Boston Evening Transcript" of Feb. 24, 1886, in which I dismissed the discussion, so far as I was concerned, in what was intended as the briefest record of Mr. Winsor's preferred views, in his own words.

It was only then that I fully appreciated the situation. The considerations that I had presented, the charts, the measurements, the historic records, had failed to remove the conviction that the guess had founded. *His method required that the guess should be defended*, in the face of what seemed to me the plainest common-sense. He still presented records in its support, and still failed to see that there had been a demonstration that the works at Stony Brook were described some centuries ago.

His method permitted all this, and it did not, in his judgment, require a more careful examination of the spot, — a *second visit to the locality*. Had he made it, he would have found, a little later, the water of the pond above drawn down, displaying a fresh section of the ditch paved throughout, making all together, with the circuit of the fort, a length for the "stockade" (!) of 2,350 feet; he would have found paved ditches on *both sides* of the brook; and had he followed the brook toward its source, he would have

¹ The length of ditch already explored as indicated on Mr. Davis's chart of Norumbega, by the scale which he gives, is on one side of the fort 600 feet, and on the other 500 feet.

found ditches, at intervals, far away, — at least to a point beyond the crossing of the Massachusetts Central Railroad some *three miles above*. Much of the lower part of the valley is now submerged by the new reservoir for the Cambridge Water-works. But had his method required it, he could have consulted the records of the Engineer's office. Had he done so he would have found that his unfinished palisade, designed to surround the future Boston, was scattered along the valley on both sides of Stony Brook on a tolerably straight line for three miles or more.¹ But the argument by which he supported his discovery would have had its substance but slightly impaired.

With a brief reference to the criticisms of some others, I left the episode to be forgotten. It had not occurred to me that the memory of the excursion to Stony Brook was to take unhappy form and be so lasting, until I was stung with the charge of "*perversions*,"² in a work to be sent as authoritative over the world; and so I have been compelled to defend and justify myself. I may, at the same time, try in a few words to relieve the reputation of Winthrop for common-sense from the shadow that has unwittingly been put upon it.

¹ I borrow from a paper in press two photographs of a ditch, with a stone wall on one side a thousand feet in length, along the valley of Stony Brook and three miles from its mouth, of which the preliminary excavations at Fort Norumbega for a palisade for the future Boston, according to Mr. Winsor's guess and argument, were a part.

² In the "Nation" of May 3, 1888, p. 368, is an article, among notices of books, in which there are several phrases that now seem almost familiar. For example: speaking of two books, one of them having been disposed of, the critic says, "The other in its wealth of *cartographical* adornment and sumptuousness of page will carry the name of *Eben Norton Horsford* as the author of the 'Discovery of America by Northmen' wherever these adventitious aids can find for it acceptance," etc. (a). "The American Scholar has nothing to do with this manifestation in his behalf" (b). "It is those who make no hesitation at *perversion* and ignore everything that does not serve their purpose," etc. (c). "If historical (?) problems are to be settled thus, there is no need of *training the judgment*" (d). "The resulting books are more significant at present in the study of psychology than in the elucidation of the problem to which they are addressed" (e).

(a) There are some persons so constituted as to be willing to accept, without murmur, costly photographs of rare and ancient maps, if numerous and on suitable paper, even though to prevent repeated foldings the gift should have the quarto form.

(b) Is there danger of invasion to be apprehended?

(c) *Perversion* is rather a strong word.

(d) Training for *research* might not be harmful.

(e) Vanquished again! But why proclaim it?

W E S 7





"RIVER FLOWING THROUGH A LAKE
INTO THE SEA"
VINLAND OF THE NORTHMEN

Copied Under Instruction by
Geo. Davis, Civil Engineer.

Scale of Miles.

x = SITE OF LEIP'S HOUSES.
T.C. THORFINN'S CLIFF.



Of course, a new exhibition of this turning to ashes of the fruit which Mr. Winsor's method bears, cannot prevent the publication that took place three years ago.

Still another distinct demonstration may be due to those who have a right to know the weight of the critic's judgment on kindred geographical questions.

How much did Winthrop do about settlement on the Charles?

Winthrop arrived at Salem in the "Arbella" on the 12th of June. On the 17th, with others of the principal men, he made an excursion to Charlestown and a few miles up the Mystic, seeking a more desirable place for settlement than Salem, returning by way of Nantasket on the 19th. He saw and appreciated the beautiful Ten Hills Farm, and caught a glimpse of the natural advantages of Boston for the seat of government.

On the 30th of May, almost *three weeks before* Winthrop made his first hurried visit to Charlestown, the "Mary and John," another ship of Winthrop's fleet, had arrived at Nantasket. Immediately after landing, Roger Clap and some eight or ten more of the passengers, of *their own accord*, seeking a place to settle, went with their baggage, arms, and supplies in a boat up the Charles till they reached a point three leagues from its mouth, where the river was *narrow and shallow*. (It had not been remarked as either before. The Charles is a tidal river for nine miles. *Shallow* does not apply to water the level of which regularly fluctuates from six to ten feet.) The place they reached was the *head of tide-water*, not far from and *below* the Watertown of to-day,¹ five miles *below the mouth of Stony Brook*. They found in the neighborhood an encampment of three hundred Indians, some of whom were taking fish in the shallow water above the head of tide-water. It was called by Josslyn, a few years later (1638), a

¹ The map of the "river flowing through a lake into the sea" sufficiently explains itself, so far as this paper is concerned. The spot where Clap and his family landed is against the shallows, — perhaps at the entrance to the narrow part between the Arsenal and Watertown bridge, above which the fall occurs. Fort Norumbega is at the mouth of Stony Brook. The ditches conceived by Mr. Winsor to have been the preliminary work for a stockade for the protection of the future Boston may be found on both sides of Stony Brook for a distance of at least three miles from its mouth.

"*fall of fresh waters* which convey themselves into the ocean through Charles River, a little below the *fall* of which they [the inhabitants] have a weir to catch fish." Clap's party *went no farther*. No other party of which there is any record went so far, though visiting messengers passed up and down.¹

I have been able to find evidence that Winthrop and his party went up the Mystic River, but no evidence that he, with or without a party, went up *any other* river in the neighborhood, or that he directed the party that discovered the convenient spot on which to found their town, inasmuch as they started on their expedition a *fortnight before Winthrop arrived in the country*, and nearly three weeks before he came to Charlestown.

The *first order* that Clap and his party, the "western men," received from Winthrop, or any representative of the government, so far as I have been able to find, was to abandon Watertown and go to Dorchester.

How do we know that Clap's party did not go above Watertown?

The record is that they went "*three leagues up Charles River*" to where the river was "*narrow and shallow*." The *mouth* of the river was between Copp's Hill and Noddle's Island (East Boston). Watertown is *nine miles above*, along the Charles. At this point they unloaded their baggage and supplies, and sheltered themselves as best they could *till their embarkation for Dorchester, to which, in view of the war news from France, they were peremptorily ordered about the 12th of July*.

They could not have gone farther by water if they had desired to, because, as they observed, their boat with the baggage and supplies *could not ascend the shallow rapids and fall at the head of tide-water*.

But why could they not have gone by land?

Because they discovered a *great body of Indians in their path*, of whom they — only eight or ten in number — were naturally afraid, and against whom they maintained a guard at night.

¹ The Watertown of Saltonstall was in the region of the present Norwood Park and the cemetery at the corner of Arlington Street on the high road from Cambridge, west, about the sources of the numerous springs and rivulets that unite to make a stream emptying into the Charles below the bridge against the Brighton Abattoir.

In conclusion: Mr. Winsor, pursuing his method of geographical research, including the examination of the historical records, and a single visit of an hour to the locality to which I personally introduced him, finds the remains of what he prefers to regard the foundations of a fortified early Boston, the future capital of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay, the work of Winthrop's men, at the mouth of Stony Brook on the Charles, fourteen miles from its mouth.

By my method, with the same materials, I fail to find any evidence that any of Winthrop's company were nearer to Stony Brook than Watertown, some five miles away, till long after the seat of government had been established on the present site of Boston.

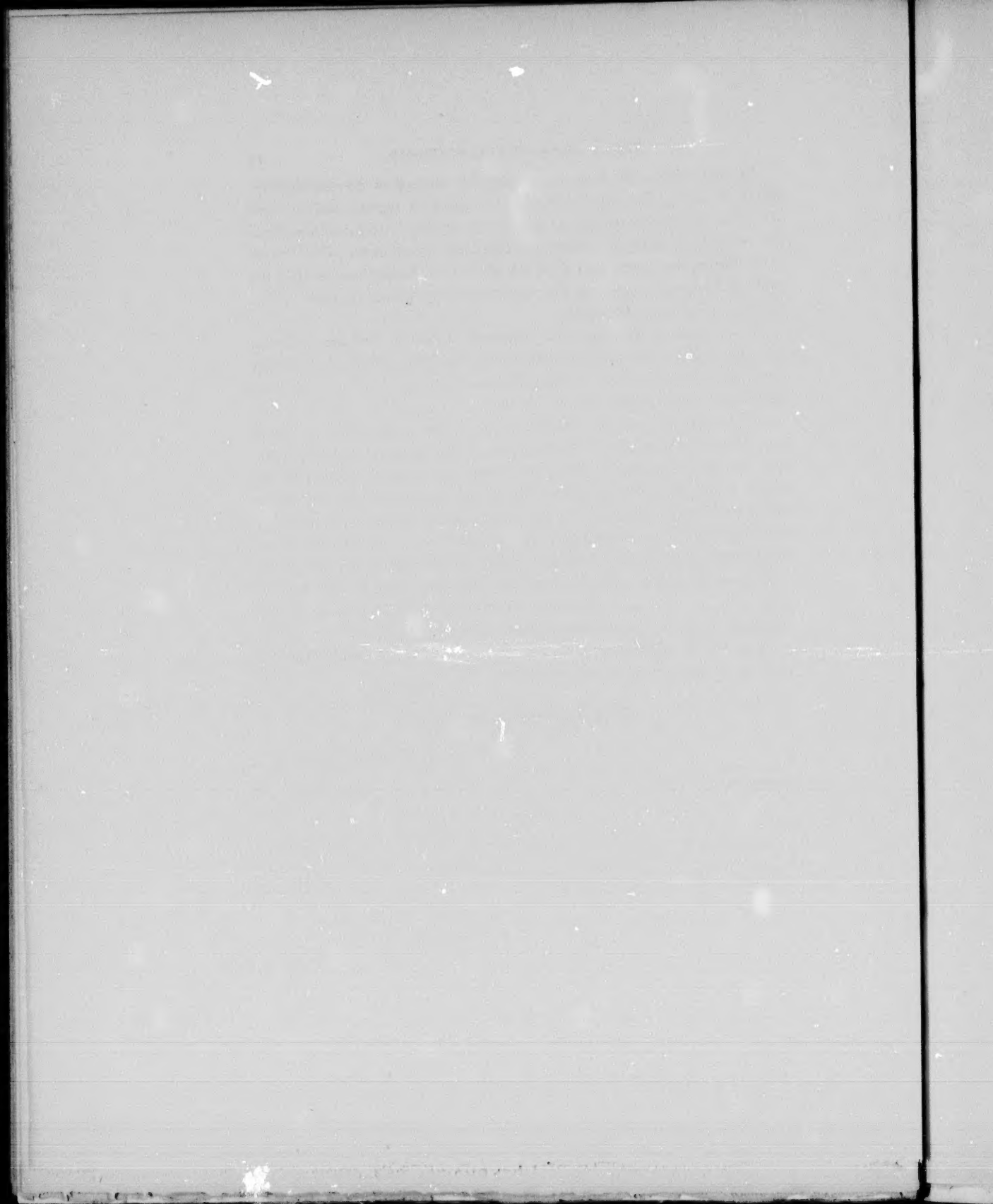
As I have demonstrated that the works at the mouth of Stony Brook were known and had been described some three hundred and fifty years ago, and as I had placed the printed copy of my demonstration in the hands of Mr. Winsor long before his communication on the site of the abandoned Boston was given to the public, and as I have now, upon his challenge, pointed out how one may estimate the value of his method of investigating a geographical question where he had before him everything needed for forming a just judgment, — I think I may feel that I have vindicated the honor of your publication of my letter of four years ago in the "Bulletin of the American Geographical Society."

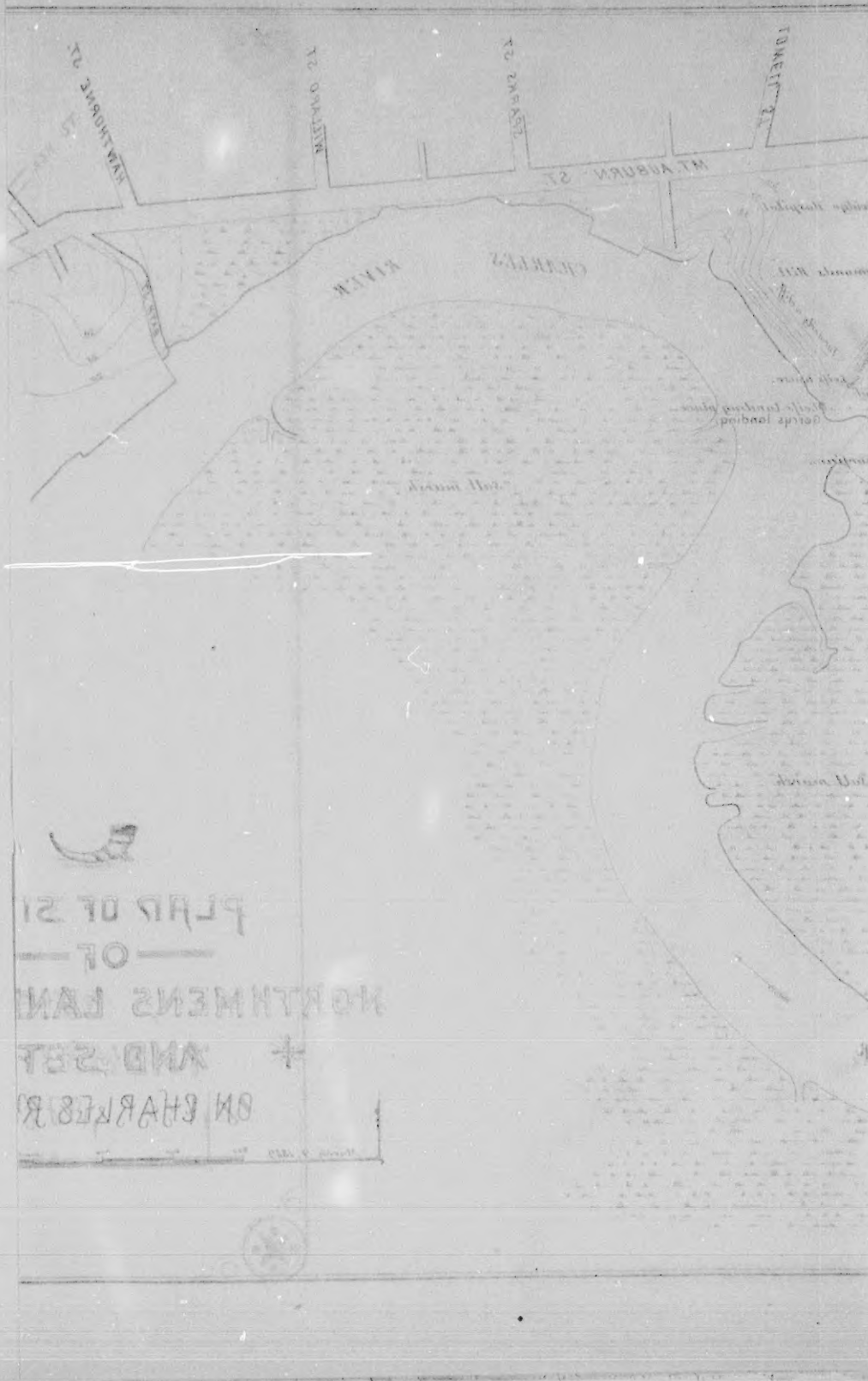
You will, I think, agree with me, that Massachusetts is still open to students of its geography and early history.

I am very respectfully yours,

EBEN NORTON HORSFORD.

CAMBRIDGE, June 1, 1889.





Mt. Auburn Cemetery.

Cambridge

Cemetery.

Promontory at the southwest

CHARLES RIVER

MT. AUBURN

Cambridge Hospital.

Symonds Hill.

Formerly a cliff.

Leffs house.

Leffs landing place.

Gerrys landing

landing place of Thorfinn.

OUTLET OF MT. AUBURN PONDS.

COOLIDGE AVE.

ELMWOOD AVE.

CHANNING ST.

LOWELL ST.

Roadway to landing.

Cott.

Cott.

House.

Cott.

Fish pit.

Fish pit.

Boon dock.

Boon dock.

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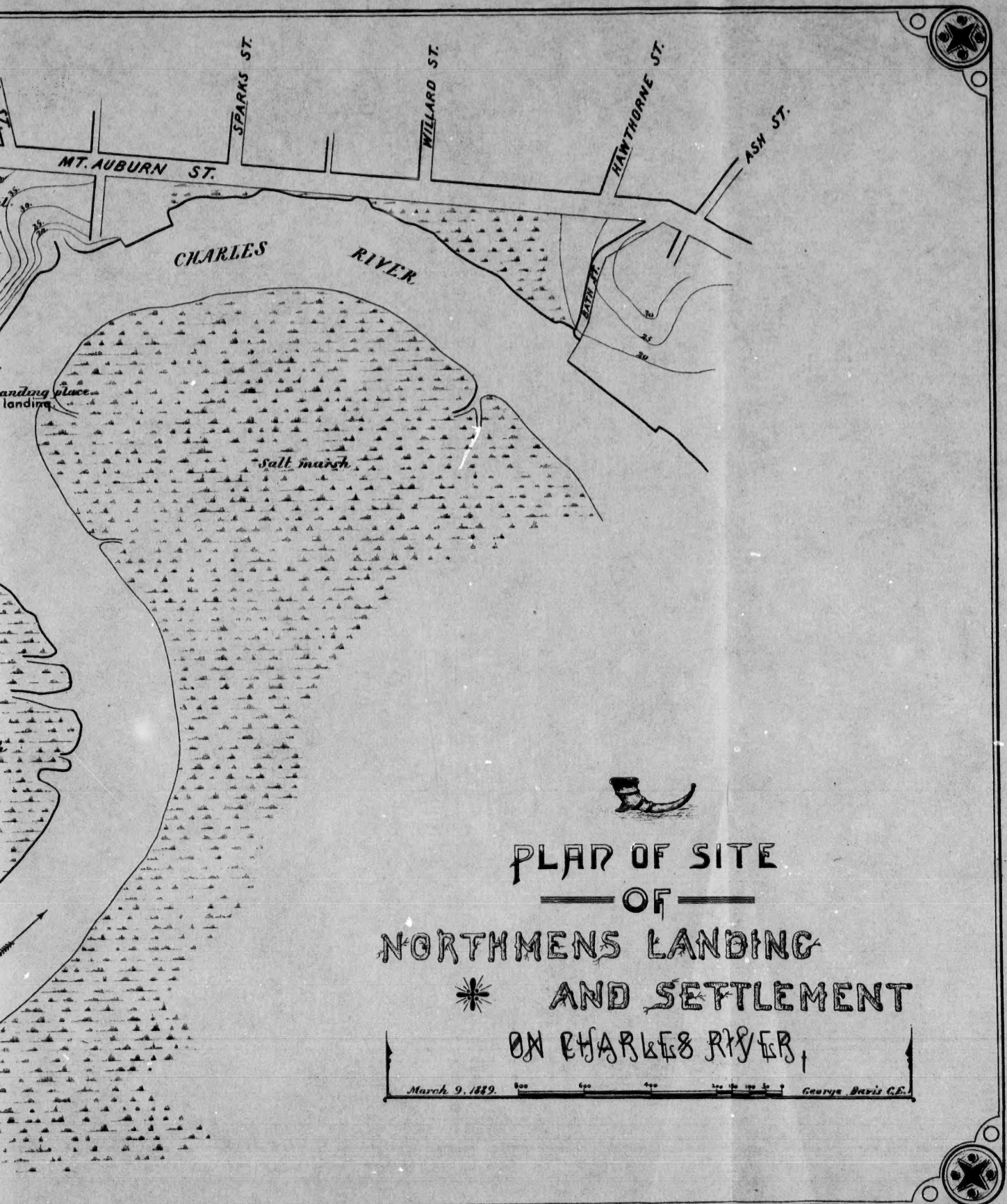
Ditch.

Ditch.

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Ditch.





PLAN OF SITE

— OF —

NORTHMENS LANDING



AND SETTLEMENT

ON CHARLES RIVER,

March 9, 1889.

000

600

400

200

100

50

25

George Davis C.E.